TEACHERS' ORGANIZATIONS' RESPONSE TO IN-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

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Project Oveaseas

In 1962, the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession was confronted with a situation that led to its being involved in in-service training in Africa. Since then, such training has gone beyond Africa to Commonwealth countries in Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean.

Shortly after the first Addis Ababa Conference of Ministers of Education, it became apparent that while universal primary education by 1980 was an established policy, in actual fact increasing resources available for education were being channelled to secondary and higher education. In 1962, the then Vice-President of the Nigeria Union of Teachers, Canon (now Archdeacon) E O Alayande, visited North America and among the discussions held with WCOTP, he outlined the pressures being exerted on his Union by underqualified primary school teachers who, with the advent of better qualified personnel coming into teaching, were actually falling further and further behind in pedagogical skills because of the lack of in-service training. At that same time, primary in-service training was not a major policy in most English-speaking countries in Africa. The problem was subsequently taken to the then General Secretary of the Canadian Teachers' Federation and a response was devised, in co-operation with WCOTP, that took on the nature of an ongoing programme within the CTF called "Project Africa".

The CTF was prepared to send qualified practising teachers and teacher trainers with a minimum of ten years of experience to take part in short in-service training courses in African countries, provided the local arrangements were made through existing teachers' organizations.

Teachers' unions agreed on the venue and selected participants from unqualified or underqualified Union members to be assembled for a minimum period of three weeks for intensive upgrading. A key factor of the plan was that an equal number of African tutors should work with the expatriates and that, in all instances, the course director should be an exprienced African tutor named by the Union. The content, in the first instance, stressed English, mathematics, science, methodology and preparation of locally made materials. A certificate of participation was awarded to those who completed the course. Costs were kept to an absolute minimum since the Canadian tutors gave of their time without charge during vacation periods, and their travel and accommodation costs were paid by the Canadian Teachers' Federation through its affiliates in the Provinces. The CTF was fortunate in that it was able to draw on the experience of a relatively large pool of teachers who had experience in Africa, either as colonial civil servants or on a contract basis and who themselves in many instances were "new Canadians". WCOTP undertook the orientation of the groups going to Africa as well as the co-ordination of all aspects of the

programme in Africa.

Project Africa touched a responsive cord. Requests for similar courses were received from a number of English-speaking Commonwealth countries. In the second year, Malawi was added to Nigeria and the course director was the present Minister for Education, the Hon. Insk Matenje, then an experienced primary school headmaster.

The programme steadily expanded. Where necessary it took on different aspects of training, including teacher organization, management and administration; but the basic concept of in-service training remained. From underqualified primary school teachers, it subsequently embraced the secondary level and in some instances teacher training institutions. The Canadian Teachers' Federation consolidated its work and renamed it "Project Overseas". It became necessary for a department within the CTF to be established, called the "International Development Assistance Programme". In 1978, they sponsored summer programmes in 13 countries, namely: The Gambia,Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Togo, India, Thailand, Velize, British Virgin Islands, Grenada, Jamaica, St Vincent and Fiji. French-speaking capability in the CTF permitted expansion into French-speaking Africa. As a typical example, during 1978, 76 participating Canadian teachers taught courses to their colleagues abroad in language, arts, maths, science, school administration, pedagogy, English as a second language, geography, business education, industrial arts and others.

It is interesting to note the administrative and cost factors involved. During the same year - a typical year - 1877 teachers in the tropics participated in the in-service programmes at a Project cost of C$5,43 per teacher student per day. Assuming that each teacher participant had a class of 35 children, 65,696 children abroad benefited during the academic year alone from the upgrading their teachers received. An important factor to the CTF is that, as a result of the project, there are about 3,000 Canadian children being taught by teachers who have a fresh view of the world in which we live and consequently integrate this view into their classrooms. Implied in all this is the raising of teacher status at home and abroad and reinforcing the international linkage of the teaching profession.

Project Overseas also included a two-year programme with the Ghana National Association of Teachers for book development. As a result, 43 manuscripts were written and illustrated by GNAT members for use in Ghana classrooms. These manuscripts have been printed and are now being tested. Leadership training is another part of the work of the CTF as well as the provision of full-time consultants for a short period to strengthen the internal adminstration of teacher unions.

The total 1978 programme had a cash budget of C$648,406 of which Canadian teacher organizations provided C$183,194. The balance of the funds came from the Canadian International Development Agency. The CTF has a membership of 215,000 and the cost represented 90 cents per teacher.

While the Canadian experience is mentioned in some detail because of its relevance to the Commonwealth, it should be pointed out that since 1968, under the impetus of WCOTP,three Swiss teacher unions have formed a consortium to carry out similar programmes in a number of French-speaking countries with emphasis on Cameroon, Mali Senegal and Zaire. Sweden has also become active, particularly in early childhood education, home economics and vocational education.

National Education Association

Early in the 1960s, the National Education Association of the United States carried out significant in-service training in Africa under large scale grants from the United States Agency for International Development. This did not stress teacher union involvement but was more of a government to government programme.

An interesting fact in all of this in-service training is the insistance that the teacher unions undertake responsibility for the full scale upgrading of their members with their own programme and budget at the earliest possible time. This has already been accomplished in a number of countries. The representative from The Gambia can attest to the fact that The Gambia Teachers' Union in-service training is now required for entrance into the teaching service of that country.

Conclusion

This brief paper has tried to show a slightly different facet of in-service training. In overall cost and manpower it, of course, cannot be compared to the undertakings of governmental and inter-governmental agencies and indeed it is not intended to duplicate or in any other way preclude regular in-service training. Rather, it hopes to establish and implant the lesson that self-help in this field is possible. It has been amply demonstrated during the fifteen years the project has been operating. All indications are that it will continue. While it is a teacher to teacher response within the framework of WCOTP, in each instance it is carried on with the full knowledge and helpful co-operation of the ministries of education concerned.